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Letter dated 19 June 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report on the high-level symposium of the Development Cooperation Forum held in Montreux, Switzerland, on 24 and 25 October 2013 on the theme "Development cooperation in a post-2015 era: sustainable development for all" (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Economic and Social Council, under agenda item 5 (b).

(*Signed*) Paul **Seger**
Permanent Representative

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Report on the high-level symposium of the Development Cooperation Forum held in Montreux, Switzerland, on 24 and 25 October 2013 on the theme "Development cooperation in a post-2015 era: sustainable development for all"

I. Introduction

1. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Government of Switzerland, organized a high-level symposium in Montreux in preparation for the fourth high-level meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum, which will be held in New York on 10 and 11 July 2014. The symposium focused on the implications for development cooperation of an agenda that brings together poverty eradication and sustainable development and applies to all countries. The meeting provided the first major opportunity for a multi-stakeholder discussion, following on from the special event of the President of the General Assembly in September 2013, at which Member States called for a unified and universal post-2015 development agenda.

2. The symposium brought together more than 150 high-level participants from a broad range of stakeholders and from the developmental and environmental realms. It included several informal meetings before the main event and side events, including for civil society stakeholders, parliamentarians and Swiss actors in development cooperation. A meeting of partners in South-South cooperation was held alongside the symposium to further the work of the core group of Southern partners. The symposium also included a meeting of the Advisory Group of the Development Cooperation Forum to discuss the preparations for the Forum in 2014.

3. The symposium built on key messages on a renewed global partnership for development for the post-2015 era generated by the high-level symposium of the Development Cooperation Forum, held in Addis Ababa from 5 to 7 June 2013, and a side event held during the substantive session of 2013 of the Economic and Social Council.[a] Its outcomes will feed directly into the Development Cooperation Forum in 2014 and the continuing work on a post-2015 global development agenda. It also set the stage for the high-level symposium on the accountability and effectiveness of development cooperation in the post-2015 era, to be held in Berlin on 20 and 21 March 2014, with informal meetings before the main event on 19 March.

4. The present report provides a summary of the key messages of the symposium in section II and a more detailed summary in section III on the changing context for development cooperation; the need for a renewed global partnership for

[a] In addition to the background materials prepared by the Department for Economic and Social Affairs, three analytical studies provided a basis for discussion: "Cooperation for sustainable development: critical challenges for development cooperation in a post-2015 world", by Andrew Rogerson and Jonathan Glennie, Overseas Development Institute, London; "Public aid as a driver for private investment", by Iliana Olivié and Aitor Pérez, Elcano Royal Institute, Madrid; and "The post-2015 sustainable development agenda: implications for development cooperation", by Kate Higgins and Shannon Kinderay, North-South Institute, Ottawa.

development; the role of development cooperation in implementing a post-2015 development agenda, with particular emphasis on resources for development; and monitoring and accountability as a powerful tool to advance the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda.

II. Key messages

5. The traditional North-South framework for pursuing global development cooperation is losing its importance. Sustainability has moved out of its environmental confines and is set to become the centrepiece of a post-2015 development agenda. A new narrative of international development cooperation that matches the changed development landscape is urgently needed.

6. A transformative agenda must be matched by a different scale and scope of support. A renewed global partnership for development is needed that brings together the Monterrey track on financing for development and the Rio track on financing for sustainable development and means of implementation, taking the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development as a starting point.

7. Development cooperation should benefit all stakeholders, especially the poor and most vulnerable, within and among countries. Least developed countries and middle-income countries will need continued support, although of different kinds. International support is needed to tackle both any unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals and new challenges of global concern.

8. Working towards the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income dedicated to official development assistance remains critical. Even if past official development assistance commitments were met, however, those resources alone would still fall far short of what will be needed to support the implementation of the global development agenda.

9. Development cooperation today is about more than the relations between Governments, both North-South and South-South, and about much more than aid. Development cooperation is about enabling and supporting, rather than driving. It is about engaging development actors in a range of customized partnerships.

10. The type, or form, of development cooperation should follow its evolving function. The support should be flexible and take into consideration country needs and specific priorities. Providing incentives for the diverse set of actors, including the private sector, will be critical to the implementation of the agenda.

11. A shared, yet differentiated, framework for multiple accountability for development cooperation commitments will be needed to ensure sustainable development results. Such a framework should put greater focus on "how" to promote inclusive development and to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of development cooperation.

12. Governments alone cannot deliver the transformation that is needed. Broad multi-stakeholder engagement will be necessary, in a renewed and dynamic global partnership for development, based on co-creation and genuine exchange.

13. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are unlikely to replace intergovernmental partnerships. They are, however, likely to become an ever more important

complement. Global multi-stakeholder partnerships, including the recent initiatives of the Secretary-General, show their great potential in engaging a broad set of actors.

14. The candid discussions in Montreux showed an openness among stakeholders to questioning some of the fundamentals of development cooperation. This suggests that space is opening up for a post-2015 financing framework that matches the ambition of a transformative, unified and universal development agenda.

III. Detailed summary

A. Changing context of development cooperation

Acknowledge the need for a new narrative

15. **Ensure that all understand and appreciate the importance of the changes taking place**. We must recognize the scope, scale and impact of the changes over the past 10 to 15 years. We must acknowledge that, moving forward, marginal adjustments will not be sufficient.

16. **Go beyond the notion of solidarity and include an agenda of common interests**. Solidarity remains an important driver of country engagement in development cooperation. In an increasingly globalized and interdependent world, an agenda of common concerns and interests is also emerging. Self-interest is now often closely associated with advancing such an agenda of common interest. Collective interests should, therefore, be seen as an integral part of self-interest.

Review the scope of development cooperation in the post-2015 era

17. **Recognize that development cooperation needs to adjust to new development challenges, in addition to tackling any unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals**. Development cooperation will need to find ways to address new challenges, such as the change in the geography of poverty, the rise in inequality, high levels of unemployment, rapid globalization and the increased need for collective approaches to global challenges.

18. **Recognize that putting sustainable development at the core of a post-2015 development agenda requires a refocusing of development efforts**. Eradicating poverty, in all its dimensions, will remain the highest priority of a post-2015 development agenda. At the same time, putting sustainable development at the core of a post-2015 development agenda implies a much broader scope beyond traditional development cooperation.

Examine the role of development cooperation beyond 2015

19. **Acknowledge the important role of development cooperation in advancing the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda**. Development cooperation can help to devise collective responses to sustainable development challenges. It can serve as an integrating force by bringing different actors and different approaches together through multi-stakeholder partnerships under the global partnership for development.

20. **Recognize that the role of development cooperation varies for different groups of countries**. For countries that depend on aid, in particular least developed

countries and countries emerging from conflict, development cooperation will continue to play an important role, in terms of both closing financing gaps and providing incentives for specific actions to promote development progress. For countries that are not dependent on aid, in particular the advanced and large middle-income countries, development cooperation plays a primarily catalytic role and helps to provide incentives for specific actions to accelerate development progress.

Find effective ways of engaging the increasingly diverse group of development actors

21. **Development cooperation today is much more than a relationship between Governments and more than aid**. While still home to most of the world's poor, emerging economies and middle-income countries are playing an active role in development cooperation. Civil society is playing an increasingly important role, both as an advocate and as a development actor on the ground. Private philanthropic foundations and private sector actors have also become increasingly involved. The ability to engage development actors, in a range of customized partnerships based on genuine exchange, will be a key determining factor for the successful implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

Explore new ways of delivering development cooperation

22. **Ensure that development cooperation adopts a long-term focus and addresses structural factors that enable sustainable development**. Rather than seeking to achieve quick wins, the renewed emphasis on sustainable development makes it even more imperative to focus on tackling systemic barriers and addressing the structural drivers of development progress.

23. **Strengthen country ownership, building on lessons learned**. Development cooperation must be locally owned and driven, supporting tailor-made approaches. National development strategies must be respected. Careful programming and a participatory approach can help to ensure a link between larger national projects and the regional, national and local levels. Good governance, both in partner and programme countries, is critical.

24. **Recognize that there are no one-size-fits-all solutions**. Development cooperation must be sufficiently flexible to allow individual solutions to individual challenges. While a post-2015 development agenda should encompass goals and targets at the global level, the global partnership for development must also reflect national priorities, needs and circumstances. It should thus promote ownership and aim to strengthen the national capacities of developing countries and local organizations and authorities.

Ensure that intergovernmental discussions on a post-2015 development agenda catch up with the changed realities on the ground

25. **The post-2015 development agenda needs to reflect the new reality of a changed development landscape**. The consultations should ensure that the voices of the various stakeholders from the ground are being heard. To support the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda effectively, the United Nations itself will also need to adapt, in terms of both its operational activities and the functioning of the United Nations system, at the global level.

B. Renewed global partnership for development in the post-2015 era

Move towards one unified financing framework, taking Monterrey as a starting point

26. **Go beyond the Monterrey Consensus**. A renewed global partnership should build on the experience of the Millennium Development Goals. A renewed global partnership needs to match the level of ambition of a transformative post-2015 development agenda. It should take the Monterrey Consensus as a starting point but go beyond it, in terms of both the integration of the diverse group of actors and the sources and modalities that it uses.

27. **Transition towards one unified financing framework**. The post-2015 development agenda should be supported by a single, unified and comprehensive financing framework. That implies bringing the Monterrey and Rio tracks together, in a comprehensive renewed global partnership for development. A unified financing framework should ensure a coherent, holistic and forward-looking approach in addressing poverty eradication and the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

Move towards a global partnership, where partners can engage on an equal footing

28. **Move away from a passive relationship between donors and recipients**. The renewed global partnership should be open, transparent and truly inclusive, enabling the diverse group of stakeholders to engage on a more equal footing. It should enable diverse actors to bring their various strengths to bear. The contributions of all actors, traditional and non-traditional, executive and non-executive, must be recognized.

Work towards a financing framework rooted in shared values and core principles

29. **Work towards a common understanding of the core values and core principles of a post-2015 financing framework**. Working together on a common understanding of shared values and core concepts will facilitate reaching agreement on a post-2015 financing framework. Fostering mutual trust and promoting mutual learning will be a critical part of ensuring a strong common understanding throughout the post-2015 process.

Bring global multi-stakeholder partnerships up to scale and initiate new ones

30. **Scale up existing global multi-stakeholder partnerships and launch new ones**. The renewed global partnerships should be complemented by global multi-stakeholder partnerships. Global partnerships, spearheaded by voluntary coalitions, have proved to be an effective tool to address development challenges. The United Nations can play an important role by serving as a facilitator for global partnerships. It can help to bring State and non-State actors together around a commonly agreed agenda.

Ensure policy coherence and an enabling environment

31. **Enhance policy coherence to advance poverty eradication and sustainable development**. Policy coherence is concerned with the compatibility of global regimes on trade, finance, technology, food security, market access and knowledge management. Such coherence becomes even more imperative with the transition

towards a unified global development agenda and the continued efforts of countries to reduce their dependency on aid.

32. **Work together towards a global enabling environment**. That includes curbing illicit financial flows, ensuring fair trade regulations and fostering financial regulations. It also involves building capacity for the implementation of the new agenda and for gathering data and monitoring and reviewing implementation. Debt sustainability and systemic issues, including the reform of international financia. institutions, will also need to be addressed.

33. **Bring the development cooperation and climate change tracks together**. With climate change increasingly threatening to reverse hard-won development gains, the differentiation between development cooperation and climate change appears increasingly artificial. Concerns about bringing the two tracks together need to be addressed proactively. Differences in the degrees of legal codification in the two areas need to be recognized and statistical methods revised to review the "additionality" of funding for global objectives, such as climate change. Both will be critical to addressing the concern that development assistance is increasingly being diverted from national development priorities to advancing global public goods (e.g. climate change, migration and biodiversity protection).

C. Role of development cooperation in implementing the post-2015 development agenda

Learn from the experience of the Millennium Development Goals

34. **Review the experience of the Millennium Development Goals to channel funds to where they have the greatest development impact**. That experience should help to guide the future allocation of resources and help with their efficient use. When a financing strategy for the post-2015 development agenda is being developed, there should be an assessment of how and where financial flows, such as official development assistance, have resulted in progress towards development goals and targets.

35. **Adopt a people-centred approach to ensure that resources continue to reach the poorest**. The strong consensus on moving towards one financing framework for the post-2015 development agenda includes an emphasis on ensuring the required allocation of resources to poverty eradication and sustainable development. A people-centred approach helps to ensure that resources are targeted to where they are most needed and where they will have the greatest impact.

Review the development cooperation toolbox

36. **Examine the available tools, in the light of changing development challenges**. There is a need, in particular, to put a greater focus on tools that promote integrated solutions, address all three dimensions of sustainable development and promote intergenerational justice. While development cooperation will continue to rely on national strategies as its main tool for matching global goals with national actions, it will also need to find mechanisms to tackle new global development challenges, such as global commons.

37. **Review the mix of resources for the implementation of a sustainable post-2015 development agenda**. A combination of both private and public resources, from both national and international financial flows, will be necessary to finance large

and growing investment needs associated with sustainable development. While raising new resources, the effective use of current resources should also be closely examined.

38. **Reassess the balance between short-term and long-term financing needs**. A greater focus on sustainable development calls for a greater focus on long-term financing, which is critical to overcoming structural barriers. The mix of short-term and long-term financial resources will need to be reviewed in the light of the new agenda.

Ensure that funds are well targeted to have the greatest development impact

39. **Focus public resources on financing gaps, where they have the greatest development impact**. Priority areas for public funds include social services and global public goods, where there is underinvestment, because the social returns of such investments do not provide a full return to the investor. Given that needs are greater than available resources, public investment should also increasingly be directed to areas where it can mobilize additional private resources.

40. **Continue to support those countries most in need**. Many of the most vulnerable countries, including the least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, are facing the greatest challenges in mobilizing other sources of development finance, such as domestic resource mobilization and private sector external investment. Those countries will need continued support through public financing.

41. **Middle-income countries will need support in order not to fall back into the poverty trap**. Middle-income countries will also require international support to avoid sliding back into poverty following graduation. Capacity-building and technology transfer will be key to supporting those countries in fostering green growth and in tackling growing inequality.

Tap more fully the potential of steady and predictable domestic resources, through improved mobilization of them

42. **Recognize that domestic resources are the most important source of development financing**. Strengthening the mobilization of domestic resources will allow countries to tap much-needed and predictable sources of development finance for the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda. Given the projected stagnation in, and possible further decline of, official development assistance in the coming years, mobilizing domestic resources of development finance will be critical to meeting the additional financial needs of a transformative and ambitious post-2015 agenda.

43. **Address the remaining challenges in tapping domestic resources**. In particular, the poorest and most vulnerable countries, including countries emerging from conflict, encounter challenges in the mobilization of domestic resources. They include tax avoidance, evasion and non-compliance, low taxpayer morale, poor governance, reliance on receipts from a narrow tax base, weak revenue administration, lower revenues from value-added tax owing to inconsistent collection and pressure on tax revenues from trade liberalization.

44. **Invest more in the strengthening of institutions and governance**. Domestic resource mobilization will require the strengthening of institutions and governance.

To date, bilateral donors have not really focused on strengthening the ability of countries to mobilize domestic resources. More funds should be devoted to this effort. However, a focus on strengthening the capacity of countries to mobilize domestic resources should reinforce and not divert attention from other national development challenges.

Continuing important role of official development assistance

45. **Existing commitments, especially the commitment of developed countries to dedicating 0.7 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance, must finally be met**. Official development assistance has fallen in two consecutive years since it peaked in 2010. It represents 0.29 per cent of the gross national income of those donors that are members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, well short of the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent.

46. **While increasingly overshadowed in quantitative terms by private financial flows, official development assistance remains an important source of funding, especially for the most vulnerable countries**. Not only does official development assistance constitute about half of all external financing available to close the savings gap, it is also unique in its focus on the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations. The projected stagnation of official development assistance from 2014 to 2016, especially in the poorest countries with the largest development gaps, is a matter of concern.

47. **Ensure that aid becomes more responsive to the needs of countries**. The allocation of aid is currently far too often dominated by considerations of political economy. Official development assistance should target geographical and thematic areas that are unlikely to attract other sources of financing. This implies that, alongside a continued focus on social issues, aid should increasingly be directed at issues of global concern, where the benefits to society cannot provide a full return to investors.

48. **Use official development assistance as a catalyst to leverage other sources of financing, thereby reducing aid dependency**. By building capacity and strengthening institutions, development cooperation can help countries to use external resources more effectively and thereby also attract additional development cooperation. Strengthened national capacity can also help to foster domestic resource mobilization and tackle illicit financial flows.

Regional development banks and regional reserve pooling arrangements have played an increasingly important role in advancing development

49. **Recognize the increasingly important role of regional development banks**. Regional banks and development financing institutions have taken on an increasingly important role in recent years in terms of the volume of their lending and their role in shaping regulatory frameworks. In addition, they have serviced a more diversified set of sectors and played an important countercyclical role during the financial crisis.

50. **Recognize the great relevance of equilibrium in the balance of payments of countries for their poverty reduction efforts**. To mitigate external shocks, several regions have set up regional reserve pooling mechanisms, which provide support for

balance of payments during crises and thus complement global countercyclical mechanisms. By providing greater policy space, they enable countries to create a buffer against the negative development impact of external shocks.

51. **Recognize the increasingly important role of Southern partners in development cooperation**. South-South cooperation has been growing rapidly as a source of development finance. However, more information is required to understand its development impact better and to assess its principles and key features. The Development Cooperation Forum could play a role in encouraging Southern partners to improve their information base by supporting analysis and dialogue on South-South cooperation.

52. **Work collectively on a financing strategy for global public goods**. A financing strategy for global public goods must be an integral part of a financing framework for a post-2015 development agenda aimed at both poverty eradication and sustainable development. Sources of international finance for public interest issues and specific global funds for global sustainability issues could be used to fund global public goods. This would imply that some bilateral engagements should shift into multilateral financing arrangements for global public goods.

53. **Explore the example of food security as one innovative example of how global public goods could be managed and financed**. The response to the international food crises provides a specific example of how different actors can come together around a set of principles, provide resources and foster action on a specific development challenge. That example has also shown that financing for sustainable development should be used to foster a two-track approach that addresses immediate needs while also helping to build capacity and stimulate investment to promote long-term development progress.

Private investment is playing an increasingly important role in advancing development

54. **Recognize that the private sector is playing an increasingly important role in the development mix**. Over recent years, private investment has outstripped public resources. Private sector resources are now widely regarded as an increasingly important source of development finance for the post-2015 development agenda. A number of private sector actors have moved beyond corporate social responsibilities and have begun to include development objectives in their core business strategies.

55. **Examine the concerns voiced about using aid as a catalyst for development finance**. The leveraging of the private sector for development has also meant bringing in commercial interests driven by profit, rather than development needs. Envisaging a greater role for the private sector in development cooperation requires a clear understanding of how it can best contribute to the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda. Private sector engagement cannot replace the role of the State in providing a conducive regulatory environment and ensuring access to essential services and public goods.

56. **Recognize that with a greater role, the private sector also needs to become more accountable for development results**. A greater role in a post-2015 setting implies the need for private sector actors to take on greater responsibilities, to integrate sustainable development goals into their core businesses and to become

accountable for achieving development results. One important step is to adopt corporate sustainability reporting and integrate it into the reporting cycle. Such reporting frameworks ensure the transparency of the positive and negative side effects of private investment.

57. **Put in place a robust regulatory framework that goes beyond corporate social responsibility to ensure that private sector investment also contributes to development progress**. Whenever aid is being used to mobilize private resources, a strong regulatory framework needs to be put in place to address market failures. Such a framework will help to ensure that public money used to mobilize private resources has the same, or a larger, development impact as if it had been devoted directly to a specific social cause.

58. **Review the development impact of foreign direct investment**. Private investment can serve as a driver of economic transformation. By promoting innovation and facilitating technology transfer, it can help to generate employment and foster green growth. When using official development assistance as a catalyst for investment, it is important to ensure that it does not provide incentives for investment that would have taken place in any case.

59. **Improve the predictability of private sector investment**. Private sector investments often fluctuate strongly with market conditions. Risk mitigation and thorough investment plans should therefore be put in place and returns made more predictable, to make the business environment secure and guarantee steady private sector flows. That will require effective institutions, strong governance systems and checks and balances on private actors.

D. Monitoring and accountability as powerful tools to advance the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda

60. **Develop a strong, integrated and inclusive framework at the global level to monitor and review progress in the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda**. There was a call at the symposium for a strong, integrated and inclusive global framework to facilitate the effective gathering and sharing of data and hold different actors to account. Such a mechanism must provide the space and resources for the engagement of civil society and other non-governmental actors.

61. **Learn from the experience of the Millennium Development Goals**. The lack of an effective framework and the accompanying fragmentation of different initiatives are often seen as one of the main explanatory factors for gaps in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Effective monitoring and accountability frameworks are needed across the entire post-2015 development agenda. The Development Cooperation Forum can, in particular, add value in the monitoring of development cooperation and the global partnership for development.

62. **Harness the notion of "nothing about us without us"**. The traditional focus of accountability on donors and recipients should be broadened to reflect better the increasingly active role of a broad range of development actors. The post-2015 era also offers an opportunity to acknowledge and more effectively integrate the role of local governments, parliaments and citizens at large.

63. **Draw upon and reinforce existing mutual accountability mechanisms**. A post-2015 accountability framework for development cooperation should reflect the various levels at which accountability is practiced (local, national, regional and

global). Studies have shown that, where they have been effectively integrated into national mutual accountability mechanisms, parliaments, civil society and foundations have played a critical role in advancing mutual accountability. Experience has shown that the applied methodology of accountability mechanisms is also critical to the success of different mechanisms.

64. **Learn from experience with regional accountability mechanisms**. Regional processes are important in measuring public finances and external aid, transparency and coordination. Important lessons can be drawn from regional tracking mechanisms, such as the Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific and the African Peer Review Mechanism. The Development Cooperation Forum can play an important role in reviewing the specific strengths of the individual regional mechanisms.

65. **Move towards a multiple accountability framework that recognizes that accountability varies between different policy areas and different actors**. Different mechanisms have codified responsibilities in more specific legal terms (e.g. environmental and human rights conventions). Further work is needed to assess how a joint global accountability framework for development cooperation commitments, based on shared core values and principles, could capture the different roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders. Accountability can be supported by an inclusive process of mutual learning and peer review.

66. **Use the existing corporate sustainability reporting systems of the private sector as a building block for a comprehensive global monitoring and accountability system**. The contribution to and effect of the private sector on sustainable development must be brought into a comprehensive accountability system. Lessons learned from the existing voluntary reporting systems of the private sector, such as the Global Compact or the Global Reporting Initiative, can be used to develop such a system.

67. **Ensure that data are timely, reliable and sufficiently disaggregated**. Good coverage and quality of data are essential for any effective global monitoring and accountability after 2015. Disaggregated data at the global, national, regional and local levels and in terms of poverty characteristics will be critical for formulating effective and well-targeted policy responses.

68. **Explore how new technologies could be used to make data more accessible**. There is a call for a data revolution to provide new avenues for citizens to participate in measuring and monitoring implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, including development cooperation commitments. Co-creation of data by different stakeholders can complement official data collection and statistics. There is a need for better disclosure requirements and open access to public data, especially with regard to the monetary flows of the private sector. Interaction between actors will have to increase to ensure transparency.